1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
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of any single Small Island today greatly exceed 400,[1] and that of the two promontories is considerably less. I shall, however, in the following pages make only very occasional use of this term, since the natives' own habit of referring to themselves by the names of their islands or promontories is equally exact and has the advantage of conforming with their own methods of thought.

The population of each Small Island is divided into a number of patrilocal villages in which descent is overtly patrilineal, marriage being regulated at first sight on a simple basis of local patrilineal exogamy. The exogamous patrilineal unit may consist of:

(1) A single-village.
(2) A double-village, sometimes comprising the whole of one Side of the Island.
(3) A group of villages comprising a whole island, as on Wala.[2]

Thus, in each unit formed of a single-village, double-village or group of villages, the population is made up of males all claiming descent from a common ancestor or ancestors in the male line, together with their wives, and their unmarried sisters and daughters. According to the rule of patrilineal exogamy with patrilocal residence, no man may marry any woman born in his own village or group of villages and who could thus claim common ancestry with him in the male line. Thus, every woman on marriage leaves the village in which she was born and goes to live in that of her husband, and the children born of the marriage belong to the husband's patrilineal kin. The patrilineal kin is thus a clan in the true sense of the term, with the men all congregated in their own ancestral patrilineal village and the women seeking husbands outside. The system embraces the whole area under consideration, since marriages take place not only with members of other villages on the same island (except in the case of Wala), but also with those of other Small Islands, as well as of the villages on the adjacent mainland of Malekula.

This pronounced system of overt patrilineal exogamy has given rise to the prevailing opinion that descent in these islands, as in other parts of Malekula, is purely "patrilineal." That this overt patrilineal organisation forms, however, only one aspect of the social scheme, will be seen clearly when we come to examine the kinship systems of the various islands.[3]

What has been said is enough for the moment to demonstrate the interdependence of all the Small Island communities and the dominance of the patrilineal principle in the regulation of residence.

With this common background, let us now briefly survey the social organisation of the various islands with regard to the arrangement and inter-relation of their villages.

[1] For exact numbers see Appendix I, pp. 745 ff.
[2] See footnote on p. 56.
[3] See Chapters V and VI.